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Senator Toni Harp's testimony on Bill 619: An Act Establishing a Futures Commission

Good morning Senator LeBeau, Representative Parone and members of the Commerce Committee. Thank you for having me here to discuss **bill 619 An Act Establishing a Futures Commission**.

Today, with Connecticut's unemployment rate over eight percent, we need to look for ways to expand Connecticut's work force and create jobs. The bill I am here to speak about, Proposed Bill 619, An Act Establishing a Futures Commission, does just that. This bill creates a Futures Commission that will evaluate the state's education and manufacturing base, identify the current and future needs of a global society and, most importantly, help Connecticut adapt to changing national and global economies.

While military spending has increased by 51% percent in Connecticut since 2003, Connecticut is a loser in this equation as we only receive eighty cents back for every one dollar we send to the Department of Defense. Currently, our state has about 6.3% of workers employed in the defense industry, which is forty thousand jobs directly tied to the industry and one hundred one thousand are impacted by the defense industry. As the wars of the past decade wind down, that spending will decrease and jobs in the defense industry will disappear. If sequestration happens in DC, they could be gone quicker than we thought. That is why this bill is so important. It will set up a commission that will allow Connecticut to adapt to changes in the national and global economies before it happens, giving our state the competitive advantage it needs to retain and create jobs.

The proposed Futures Commission will set up a framework that allows us to convert many of our military related jobs and infrastructure into non-military industries. This “economic conversion” will allow us to keep jobs in the state as we retrain our state’s workers for other industries. Much like the economic conversion that took place after World War II, we need to begin thinking about jobs in our state as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan wind down. If we want to take advantage of the green economy that the Obama Administration is pushing, we need to have the infrastructure and trained workers in our state to do so. **A Futures Commission will identify how we do this, what types of training and education we need to give our workers, and ensure our state has a plan to get it done.**

I urge the Connecticut State Legislature to pass this bill and set up a Futures Commission that will begin identifying the needs of the future so our state can adapt to a changing world.

Making sure we are able to take advantage of new industries and jobs, will allow us to keep Connecticut's workers employed and their families healthy.

Thank you.